

## Memorandum of Understanding

### California's Coordinated Regional Strategy to Conserve Biological Diversity "The Agreement on Biological Diversity"

September 19, 1991

#### **I. Preamble**

California is one of the most biologically diverse areas in the world. The state's rich natural heritage--vegetation cover and distribution, wildlife and fish habitat, recreation and aesthetic values, water and air quality--provides the basis for California's economic strength and quality of life. Sustaining the diversity and condition of these natural ecosystems is a prerequisite for maintaining the state's prosperity.

Public agencies, private organizations, and individual citizens have long shared a commitment to conserving the natural environment of their state. Laws, policies, and programs already in place protect many of the elements of California's natural heritage. That experience, and a growing body of scientific research, demonstrate the need to move beyond existing efforts focused on the conservation of individual sites, species, and resources. Californians now recognize the need to also protect and manage ecosystems, biological communities, and landscapes.

These broader systems represent an important component of the state's biological diversity--the full variety of living organisms in California, the genetic differences among them, and the communities and ecosystems in which they occur. These ecological systems appear throughout the state across a variety of ownerships and jurisdictions. To effectively conserve California's biological resources and maintain social and economic viability, public agencies and private groups must coordinate resource management and environmental protection activities, emphasizing regional solutions to regional issues and needs.

#### **II. Purpose**

This Memorandum of Understanding establishes an Executive Council to develop guiding principles and policies, design a statewide strategy to conserve biological diversity, and coordinate implementation of this strategy through regional and local institutions.

#### **III. Policy and Principles**

This memorandum recognizes the following set of policies and principles.

A. The signatory parties agree to make the maintenance and enhancement of biological diversity a preeminent goal in their protection and management policies. Furthermore, they agree to work with the Executive Council to develop and adopt a coordinated regional strategy that ensures protection of biological diversity and the maintenance of economic viability throughout California.

B. The basic means of implementing the strategy are to be improved coordination, information exchange, conflict resolution, and collaboration among the signatory parties. In addition, the signatories agree to pursue the development of local and regional institutions and practices necessary to conserve biological diversity. These tools may include the establishment of mitigation and development banks, planning and zoning authorities, land reserve acquisition, incentives, alternative land management practices, restoration, and fees and regulation.

C. Community and public support are vital to the success of a bioregional program. Human communities, local economies, and private property are important regional attributes to be maintained. As a consequence, signatories will develop procedures and guidelines to facilitate public education, dialogue and participation, and to minimize the disruption of human communities and expectations. Public lands are to be given first preference as reserves and conservation areas. Impacts on private lands will be minimized to the degree possible.

D. Biological diversity is to be viewed as an attribute of natural processes operating at the landscape, ecosystem, species, and genetic levels. These processes are dynamic varying over time and space. A recognition is made that these processes are altered by both human and natural factors. While the focus of the agreement is on biological factors, abiotic elements are also recognized as important components of natural systems. The signatories agree to pursue the establishment of measurable baselines and standards of diversity as a means to conserving biological resources over time.

E. Given the changing characteristics of both the biological and social environment, the signatories agree to an adaptive approach in the development of bioregional strategies. Such an approach will place substantial emphasis on monitoring, assessment, and research programs. These programs will help determine if strategies are accomplishing their intended objectives, maximize the opportunities to learn from experience, and enhance the flexibility in the face of new knowledge.

#### **IV. Authority**

This Memorandum does not modify or supercede existing statutory direction of the signatories.

#### **V. Organization**

A. *Statewide Executive Council* - The Executive Council is to be chaired by the Secretary of The Resources Agency of California and made up of the principal signatory agencies. The Council will set statewide goals for the protection of biological diversity, recommend consistent statewide goals for the protection of biological diversity, recommend consistent statewide standards and guidelines, encourage cooperative projects and sharing of resources, and cooperate in the following program areas:

- Biodiversity-related policies and regulations;
- Land management, land use planning, and land and reserve acquisition and exchange;

- Private landowner assistance;
- Educational outreach, public relations, and staff training;
- Monitoring, inventory, and assessment;
- Restoration; and
- Research and technology development.

The Council will seek adequate funding to implement regional strategies and to develop necessary state and regional institutions, such as trading and mitigation banks. Further, the Council will cooperate with regional representatives to define the boundaries of bioregions and to help establish Bioregional Councils.

The Council will meet quarterly to review progress in accomplishing its mission. Representatives of other state and federal agencies and sponsors will be invited to participate in the meetings of this group. The Council will produce and distribute to the public regular summaries of its activities.

*B. Sponsors* - A sponsor may be any special interest group or organization that supports the purpose and intent of this Memorandum of Understanding. Sponsors will be expected to promote the development and adoption of biodiversity strategies and principles through their membership and activities. Sponsor representatives are to be invited to attend and participate in any Executive Council meeting or activity. Sponsorship should help enhance consensus and participation in the adoption of bioregional strategies.

*C. Bioregional Councils* - Regional administrators of signatory agencies will develop regional memoranda of understanding with the purpose of establishing Bioregional Councils. Participation of additional organizations specific to each region, such as county governments and local environmental and industry groups, will be encouraged. The Councils are to work with regional and local authorities to implement biodiversity policies. In addition, Bioregional Councils will actively encourage the development of watershed or landscape associations to assist in implementing regional strategies.

*D. Watershed and Landscape Associations* - Local staffs of signatory agencies will encourage the participation of local public, landowner, and private organizations in the formation of watershed or landscape associations. These associations will be encouraged to develop specific cooperative projects that help to achieve regional and statewide objectives. Use of a Coordinate Resource Management Planning process will be encouraged. The local associations are to be a primary forum for the resolution of local issues and conflicts related to biodiversity concerns.

## **VII. Modifications**

This agreement is to remain into effect until modification by the parties in writing; it is negotiable at the option of any one of the parties.

**ADDENDUM** - A statement of intent to support the agreement on biological diversity. California Counties have long recognized the importance of maintaining productive healthy natural resources and ecosystems which in turn provide the setting of lifestyles, scenery, recreation, and the diversity of natural life systems, while providing resources

for raw materials to produce products, jobs, and community stability.

California Counties support the Agreement on Biological Diversity in the context of balanced and wise use of natural resources. To alleviate the difficult task of allocating uses of these resources, Counties support the idea of coordinated and cooperative planning efforts of multiple jurisdictions, species, and ecosystems. These efforts should be conducted with strong local leadership and the participation of everyone concerned with natural resource use and management and implemented consistent with existing local, state, and federal laws and regulations.

With the active participation of locally elected leaders, land managing agencies, and locally affected publics, we believe the Agreement can help California's rich biological diversity for future generations to enjoy and promote responsible development as we strive to meet the future needs of California's citizens.